

CLAIMS

We claim:

1 1. A method of producing a printing plate comprising
2 providing a thermal transfer film carrying a thermal transfer material in proximity
3 to a surface of a printing plate carrier,
4 selectively ablating said thermal transfer material using a laser image-setting unit
5 to apply structure information directly to the surface of said printing plate carrier, thereby
6 forming a mask directly on said printing plate carrier, and
7 forming image points and non-image points directly on said printing plate carrier
8 using said mask in order to produce a printing plate.

1 2. A method as in claim 1 wherein said printing plate is a gravure printing
2 plate.

216 1 3. A method as in claim 2 wherein said mask is an etching mask which is
2 applied to the surface of the printing plate carrier, said method further comprising etching
3 gravure printing cells by applying acid where said thermal transfer material has been ablated.

1 4. A method as in claim 3 wherein said structure information is applied to a
2 variable area of said surface with a constant thickness using an autotypical image-data process
3 during ablation of said transfer material using said laser image setting unit.

1 5. A method as in claim 1 wherein said printing plate is a flexographic
2 printing plate.

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1 6. A method as in claim 5 wherein said printing plate carrier comprises a
2 light sensitive coating which forms said surface, said mask being a copying mask which is
3 applied to the surface of said carrier, said method further comprising exposing said light-
4 sensitive coating through said mask by means of a copying lamp in order to form image points
5 and non-image points on said light sensitive coating.

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1 7. A method as in claim 6 wherein said copying mask is a positive copying
2 mask.

1 8. A method as in claim 6 wherein said mask is a negative copying mask.

1 9. A method as in claim 1 wherein said printing plate is a screen-printing
2 screen.

1 10. A method as in claim 9 wherein said mask is a copying mask.

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1 11. A method as in claim 10 wherein said printing plate carrier comprises a
2 network-like fabric structure which forms said surface, said fabric structure being coated
3 throughout with a light sensitive material, said method comprising applying said copying mask
4 to said fabric structure and exposing said light-sensitive coating through said mask by means of a
5 copying lamp in order to form image points and non-image points on said light sensitive coating.

1 12. A method as in claim 10 wherein said copying mask is a positive mask.

1 13. A method as in claim 10 wherein said copying mask is a negative mask.

1 16. A method as in claim 1 wherein said mask is formed in a printing
2 machine, and said printing plate is produced by means of said mask in said printing machine.